

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the application and claims in light of the foregoing amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

I. Status of the Claims

Claims 1-33 are pending in the present application.

Claims 23-33 have previously been withdrawn from consideration.

Claims 6, 9 and 10 have now been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

Claims 1-22 were rejected.

Claims 1, 3-5, 11, 19 and 20 have now been amended. No new matter has been added. Support for the amendments can be found, for example, in original claims 6, 9 and 10 and page 6, lines 21-30 of the original specification.

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 1-5, 7, 8 and 11-33 will be pending.

II. Claim Objections

Claim 3 was objected to for including an informality. As suggested in the Office Action, the dimensions of the cross-sectional area recited in claim 3 have now been converted to square meters (see Detailed Action, Page 2). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to claim 3 is therefore respectfully requested.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 4, 5, 11, 19 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention.

Claims 4, 5, 19 and 20 have now been amended to delete the phrase "particularly preferably" and the limitations thereafter. Claim 11 has now been amended so that "intermediate contact bars" have sufficient antecedent basis.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 4, 5, 11, 19 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, is respectfully requested.

IV. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,679,240 to Anastasijevic et al. ("Anastasijevic"). Claims 6, 7 and 9-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Anastasijevic in view of German Application No. 199 40 698 to Nikola Anastasijevic et al. ("Nikola"). Claims 6, 9 and 10 have now been cancelled, and similar subject matter is now recited in amended independent claim 1. Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Anastasijevic in view of Nikola, and in further view of U.S. Publication No. 2003/0173214 by Juric et al. ("Juric"). Claims 13-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Anastasijevic in view of Nikola, and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,651,024 to Gensini et al. ("Gensini"). Claims 18-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Anastasijevic in view of Nikola, in further view of Gensini, and yet in further view of U.S. Patent No. 4,098,668 to Anderson et al. ("Anderson"). Claims 18-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Anastasijevic in view of Nikola, in further view of Gensini, and yet in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,865,967 to Hiai et al. ("Hiai"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 of the present application has now been amended so as to recite the step of "distributing current between the anode and the cathode by providing a first contact bar and a second contact bar at an edge of the electrolyte tank, each of the contact bars being connected to a power source, the first end of the hanger bar of the cathode resting on the first contact bar via a two-line contact and the first end of the hanger bar of the anode resting on the second contact bar via a two-line contact, the second end of the hanger bar of the cathode resting on a cathode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars and the second end of the hanger bar of the anode resting on a cathode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars." It is respectfully submitted that Anastasijevic, Nikola, Juric, Gensini, Anderson

and Hiai, alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest the foregoing step of amended claim 1.

As acknowledged in the Office Action, Anastasijevic fails to disclose or suggest contact bars or equalizer bars. See Detailed Action, Pages 5 and 6. In the Office Action, Nikola was relied on with respect to the features of claims 6, 9 and 10, which features have now been incorporated into amended claim 1. See Detailed Action, Pages 5 and 6. However, it is respectfully submitted that Nikola fails to disclose or suggest distributing current between the anode and the cathode, and further that Nikola fails to disclose resting a second end of the hanger bars on respective equalizer bars disposed on one of the contact bars as required by amended claim 1. In contrast, the support bars 8 of Nikola rest at a first end on one of the two bus bars 6, 7 and at a second end merely rest on one of support rails 16, 17. See Nikola, FIG. 1. These supporting rails 16, 17 at the second end are not disposed on either one of the bus bars 6, 7 and therefore Nikola fails to disclose or suggest resting a second end of hanger bars respectively on a cathode or an anode equalizer bar *disposed on one of the contact bars* as required by amended claim 1. See Nikola, FIG. 2. It is respectfully submitted that block 8b of Nikola is at the first end of the support bars 8 and merely serve to conduct current from one of the bus bars 6, 7 to the support bar 8. See Detailed Action, Page 6, paragraph addressing claims 9 and 10, and Nikola FIGS. 1 and 2. Moreover, because the supporting rails 16, 17 are not disposed on the bus bars 6, 7, Nikola also fails to disclose or suggest distributing current between an anode and a cathode as also required by amended claim 1.

It is respectfully submitted that Juric, Gensini, Anderson and Hiai fail to correct the deficiency of Anastasijevic and Nikola discussed above.

Because each of Anastasijevic, Nikola, Juric, Gensini, Anderson and Hiai fail to disclose or suggest at least the above-recited step of amended claim 1, any combination of these references, to the extent proper, could not render claim 1 or any of its dependent claims 2-5, 7, 8, and 11-22 obvious. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the respective rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on respective combinations of Anastasijevic with Nikola, Juric, Gensini, Anderson and/or Hiai is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and arguments, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

If there are any other issues remaining which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any unpaid fees deemed required in connection with this submission, including any additional filing or application processing fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or 1.17, or to credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 12-1216.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

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